"To judge from the type of house constructed, the problem of shelter among the Siriono is not a serious one. Little time is spent in making a dwelling, nor when built does it comfortably protect them either from the inclemencies of the weather or from the ubiquitous insect pests that continually harass them. The house, whether shared by the entire band or hastily erected by a single family or hunting party on the march, is always the same general type, although varying in size and degree of completeness. It consists of a roughly rectangular frame of poles against which are set, at an angle but not bound together, the long leaves of the motacú palm. The house is thus but an elaboration of the most simple type of lean-to or wind screen.

No one person supervises the construction of a house. Before building one, a site is selected by general agreement. It must be near water and relatively free of underbrush but at the same time should contain a few sturdy trees to serve as upright supports or columns upon which to lash the frame. Care is taken to select a spot which contains no dead or rotten trees that may fall over during occupancy. However, trees are never cut down to clear a house site; rather, the house is built around them.

After a site has been selected, the men go in quest of poles for the frame. Nowadays these are cut from nearby trees with machetes, but formerly they were doubtless hacked off with the digging stick. No particular type of wood is specified for the construction of the frame, although frequent use is made of soft chonta palm trunk and of heavy bamboo, which is abundant in certain parts of the area. The sturdiness and size of the poles for

the frame depend upon the number of people who will occupy the house. They must be of sufficient strength to withstand the weight of all the people in the house, since their hammocks and gear are tied to the poles of the frame as well as to the trees onto which they are lashed. If the distance between the trees to be used seems too great to bear the weight that the poles will have to support when they are lashed between them, additional forked trunks are sunk upright in the ground by digging them in with the digging stick to add further support to the frame.

The poles, when cut, are lashed to the outer side of the trees and in the forks of the upright columns with lianas, which are wound several times around the poles and the supports until they are secure. This liana lashing is fastened with half hitches. The entire frame is bound to the trees and to the upright supports at a height of about 5 feet above the ground.

The next and final operation in house building consists merely in setting against the frame, at an angle of about 60° from the ground, several layers of the green leaves of the motacú palm. [18] These leaves, which form both the walls and the roof, are placed with the butt end on the ground. As they are about 15 feet long, they bend rather sharply at the top, so that when they have been placed around the whole frame, the house has a somewhat conical appearance. Often the leaves are not long enough to meet at the top, thus leaving a gap through which the smoke from the fires between every two hammocks

escapes, and through which the rain enters freely during a storm. The house contains no doors or windows; one merely works one's way in through the palm leaves."

1: Holmberg--18 (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 342, 592

"Nuclear families on a hunting and gathering expedition, when they may be absent from the band for from a few days to several weeks and are rather constantly on the march, take even less trouble in the construction of a nightly shelter. All they build is a rude shelter constructed like one side of the above-described house. The Siriono country is dotted with the remains of shelters erected by hunting parties that have stopped there for a night or two in their wanderings."

1: Holmberg--18 [2] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 342

"Having roamed over an extensive part of the area where the Siriono are accustomed to travel throughout the year, I can report that these are the only types of shelters that I ever saw built. When it rains, a shelter is improved to the extent that a few large leaves of patujú--a wild plant resembling the banana plant but not producing fruit--may be placed between the layers of motacú leaves and over the hammock where an individual sleeps, but such improvisations are rarely adequate to give one a dry night of rest if the rain is more than a sprinkle. On occasions when it rains heavily--and this happens on the average about 2 or 3 nights per week during the rainy season--the Siriono grumblingly takes down his hammock and squats by the fire, which is always carefully protected from the rain by leaves of the patujú, until the downpour passes. Consequently, he undergoes many a sleepless night during the year."

1: Holmberg--18 [3] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 342, 462

"The building of a house entails no magical procedure, and it is almost always exclusively a task of the men. Arriving at a new camp site, the women are usually immediately occupied in tending their children, unpacking their gear, carrying water, and kindling a fire for cooking what victuals the day's march and hunt may have yielded. Meanwhile the men work cooperatively in cutting and lashing the poles for the frame. The number of leaves placed against the frame, however, is largely an individual matter; if a man makes no move to cover that part of the frame where he will sleep with his family, no one else will bring leaves to cover his section of the houses for him."

1: Holmberg--18 [4] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 342, 476

"At best, rarely more than two layers of leaves are placed over the frame. Moreover, a new house is never built larger than a size just sufficient to accommodate the people present at the time of building. If families are away from the band at the time, additional space is not provided to accommodate them, and when they return they themselves will have to add a section to the main house."

1: Holmberg--18 [5] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 342, 162

"The average house sheltering a band of from 60 to 80 people is approximately 60 feet long, 25 feet wide, 15 feet high at the center, and about 5 feet high at the frame. It can be constructed in about an hour's time. Seldom is more than 15 minutes or a half an hour spent in the construction of a lean-to for the night."

1: Holmberg--18 [7] (1941-42) 1950 Siriono
116, 342

"The determination of why the Siriono maintain such an apathetic attitude toward house building and sheltering themselves from the unpleasant aspects of their environment, such as rain, cold winds, and insect pests, presents an interesting psychological problem. When first traveling with them, I was puzzled at why they even took the trouble to place a few leaves over their hammocks, since these seemed to offer them no visible protection. On closer scrutiny, however, I found that the few leaves placed over their hammocks did protect them from twigs and small branches which are continually falling from tropical trees in the night. Moreover, placing a few leaves over the hammock protects them from the rays of the moon, which are believed gradually to cause blindness if they fall directly on a sleeper. Other than this, the shelters of the Siriono seem to offer them little protection."

3: Métraux--112 [4] (no date) 1942 Siriono
116, 342, 513

"Houses were extremely primitive: A simple shelter or screen of motacu leaves was leaned against a transverse stick attached to two trees. When it rained, additional patuju or banana leaves or mats were added to the flimsy structure. Each family had its own fire. People slept in hammocks, which were made with fiber warp elements twined together at wide intervals by cotton threads. When traveling, the Siriono used small hammocks that served only for sitting."

"The Siriono Indians' huts are to them known as tuyúa. Those original huts of theirs are quite different from those nowadays occupied by them at Casarabe (fig. 11) [MPK: not reproduced for this file.] There however the Indians built one of the ancient type in order to show me what it looked like (figs. 12 [MPK: not reproduced for this file.] and 13). From people who had become acquainted with the Indians in their roving days I also gathered some information as to the appearance of the huts. [42]

In its exterior form, the ready-built hut is conical or like a beehive in shape. The walls of the hut are constructed of the leaves of motacu--a palm--closely packed into a thick layer, and with the stalks partly planted in the ground. The supporting framework may vary in construction, of which a variety is shown in the schematic drawing, fig. 13. As will be seen on the left, a straight, horizontally laid bough of a tree is supported by two forked poles. In order to give steadiness to this construction, it is leaned against the trunk of a growing tree and a palm.

One end of the horizontally placed pole seen on the right in the picture rests on a forked stick driven into the ground, while the other is supported by the first-mentioned pole and lashed on to it with liana string. Against these two horizontal poles are then leaned the motacu leaves that form the walls of the hut.

Strictly speaking, the Siriono hut is a combination of a number of primitive wind-screens. That the framework of a rude hut like the one just described may vary from one instance to another is only natural. Thus the ground plan of the hut may vary in

adaptation to the framework, and it is only from the thick layer of palm-leaves that the hut receives its conical or beehive shape. In the erection of a hut it is usual to take into account what trees there are on the building-site for constructional supports. And from their trunks, hammocks are suspended.

The use of forked posts must be regarded as a relatively recent element in the art of building, whose existence was made possible by access to iron tools. Prior to this, their office was no doubt filled by two crossed sticks tied together with liana rope (fig. 13 C) or by two upright sticks similarly jointed (fig. 13 B). Constructional details of this type I have observed among the Moré Indians on Guaporé in the erection of huts of a simpler kind."

4: Ryden--43-44 (1939) 1941 Siriono
116, 171, 342

"The Siriono hut is of such simple construction that it presents no useful object for comparative study. No exact counterpart of it is known to me from the South American forest region. The huts used by the tribes of that area for permanent habitation are all of a considerably higher development constructionally, although no doubt constructions like the above may occur in the case of occasional dwellings or shelters erected on hunting expeditions. Descriptions of such hunting shelters are however few, although TESSMANN (1930) depicts and mentions them from a number of Peruvian tribes. The hut of bee-hive shape must be regarded as [44] a cultural element peculiar to the primitive tribes of South America, dwelling-huts of this type being, e.g., mentioned by NIMUENDAJÚ (1934) from the little-known, primitive Oti Indians on the Capivara river in Brazil. The hut of bee-hive shape, which must be regarded as the nearest approach to the Siriono hut, is particularly well represented in the Chaco region. But here, as often is the case with the hunting shelters of eastern Peru (TESSMANN 1930, Taf. 29:3), one does not find the supporting frame construction. The posts or the palm-leaves are set down with their points supporting each other, while the proximal end is stuck in the ground. It is possible that in earlier times the Siriono possessed huts of this type, but that the use of the hammock--if indeed this cultural element was introduced comparatively recently among these Indians--caused them to modify the construction of the hut to the extent of their having to build the hut alongside rooted trees from which the hammocks could be suspended."

5: Radwan--293 T-3 (1928?) 1928 Siriono
116, 181, 342, 361, 621

The Sirionos are true forest Indians. In groups of about fifty, they lead a hidden life in the dark of the forest, shunning clearings and especially the grass plains, "Pampas." The entire group generally lives in a single hut of light structure. For perpendicular beams, trees are used most frequently. At a height of about two meters, cross beams are fastened with the help of creeping vines on which leaves of the motacu palm are leaned. On the edge of the forest path about 30 meters before and behind the hut, skulls of captured animals are impaled on a stake, sometimes ten one above the other.

5: Radwan--294 [3] T-3 (1928?) 1928 Siriono
116, 342, 411, 727

They take great care in the fashioning of their weapons. The arrows are to be regarded as true works of art. Bows and arrows have a considerable length of one and a half to two and a half meters. The bows are kept in water, the arrows lie in the hut. In a corner there is a kind of ground-floor (Bodenraum) due to some special cross-beams against which the arrows and provisions rest. The feathers of the arrows dangle freely in the air. Probably today every Indian group possesses axes or sword-like knives (machete) which were obtained as booty while on raids.